The background of the entire page is a photograph of several elephants in a natural setting, with their heads and trunks visible. The image is slightly faded to allow the text to stand out.

GOP IS BLOCKING CONGRESS FROM MAKING PROGRESS FOR WORKING FAMILIES

GOP CONGRESS PUTS SPECIAL INTERESTS
AHEAD OF PUBLIC INTEREST

SPECIAL REPORT

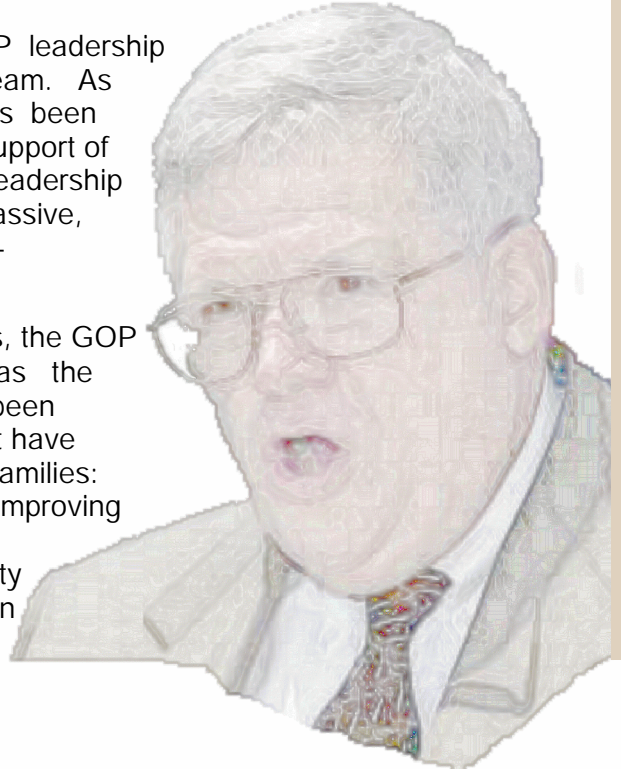


Richard A. Gephardt, House Democratic Leader
July 27, 2000

GOP CONGRESS PUTS SPECIAL INTERESTS AHEAD OF PUBLIC INTEREST

On issue after issue, the House and Senate GOP leadership are simply out-of-touch with the American mainstream. As this DPC report will show, the GOP leadership has been blocking key initiatives that have the overwhelming support of people across the country. The fact is that the GOP leadership has had no agenda for the 106th Congress except massive, fiscally-irresponsible tax cuts for their wealthy, special-interest friends.

In terms of the issues facing ordinary working families, the GOP leadership has offered [no solutions](#). Instead, as the *Washington Post* editorial quoted below notes, it has been Democrats — although they are in the minority — that have placed on the agenda the key issues facing ordinary families: prescription drugs for seniors, managed care reform, improving the quality of education, a minimum wage increase, strengthening Social Security and Medicare, gun safety measures, and campaign finance reform. However, on each of these issues, the GOP leadership — at the behest of their special-interest allies, which are pouring millions of dollars into their campaign coffers — are blocking real solutions as follows:



- ⊙ At the bidding of drug companies, the GOP leadership is **blocking** a real Medicare prescription medicine benefit for this nation's seniors;
- ⊙ At the bidding of the HMO and health insurance industries, the GOP leadership is **blocking** real managed care reform;
- ⊙ At the bidding of the religious right, the GOP leadership is **blocking** measures to improve the public schools (instead pushing proposals to divert taxpayer dollars into private and religious schools);
- ⊙ At the bidding of employer groups, the GOP leadership is **blocking** raising the minimum wage;
- ⊙ At the bidding of big-money donors wanting [massive](#) tax cuts instead, the GOP leadership is **blocking** investing the surplus to strengthen Social Security and Medicare and provide fiscally-responsible, targeted tax relief for working families;
- ⊙ At the bidding of the gun rights lobby, the GOP leadership is **blocking** gun safety measures; and
- ⊙ At the bidding of their big-money donors, the GOP leadership is **blocking** campaign finance reform.

In addition to blocking these key initiatives, the GOP leadership has spent their time trying to score election-year political points — rather than making real achievements for the American people.

"This is an unusual Congress in that Democrats ... have been able to set much of the agenda even though the Republicans have the majority. The Republicans have spent the year on the defensive."

Washington Post editorial, 7/10/00

For example, the GOP claims that their top priority is getting tax relief for American families. And yet, instead of delivering tax relief to the American people by sitting down and negotiating bills the President would sign, the Republicans have decided to play politics instead — passing tax cuts bills they *know* he will veto, as follows:

- S** **“GOP ‘Marriage Penalty Relief’ Bill Targeted to the Wealthiest Households** — Republicans are sending to the President’s promised veto their so-called “Marriage Penalty Relief” bill — which is targeted to upper-income couples and [which actually provides half of its tax relief to couples not paying any marriage penalty!!!](#) By contrast, the President would sign a *real* marriage penalty relief bill — a bill where all of the tax relief is focused on eliminating the marriage penalty for working families.
- S** **“GOP Estate Tax Relief Bill Targeted to the Wealthiest Households** — In the fall, Republicans will be sending to the President’s promised veto the GOP Estate Tax Relief bill — [providing fully one-half of its tax relief to only 3,000 of America’s wealthiest families!!!](#) By contrast, the President would sign an estate tax relief bill that is targeted to providing relief for family farmers and small business owners.

The lack of legislative accomplishment this year is notable. [Only 78 bills have been signed into law so far this year.](#)



[Furthermore, of the 78 bills signed into law, eighteen — or one out of four — have been “naming” bills — bills naming post offices, court houses, and other federal buildings!!](#) Overall, 67 of the 78 bills signed into law (including the 18 “naming” bills) — or 86% of the bills — were so noncontroversial and minor that they were considered under suspension of the rules and/or were passed by voice vote.

Even among the limited goals that the Republican leadership set out at the beginning of the year, the list of bills enacted into law is shockingly short. For example, there is:

No ESEA Reauthorization
No Older Americans Act Reauthorization
No Bankruptcy Reform
No Electricity Restructuring
No Brownfields Initiative

The *few* accomplishments that Congress has achieved this year were when Republicans decided to reach out to Democrats and work on a bipartisan basis. The handful of bills that were true accomplishments included Repealing the Social Security Earnings Limit (contained in the President’s budget the last two years); Requiring Disclosure by Section 527 Political Organizations; and the bipartisan E-Signatures bill.

However, unfortunately, there is just a handful of such achievements; generally, the Republicans have simply [squandered](#) the last seven months.

GOP IS BLOCKING A REAL MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION BENEFIT FOR SENIORS

"All told, Citizens for Better Medicare's members [which are largely drug companies] have made more than \$9.9 million in soft money, PAC, and individual contributions to federal parties and candidates this election cycle. Three-quarters of that money went to Republicans, who are spearheading a drug proposal they [the drug companies] like."

— Center for Responsive Politics
Money in Politics Alert Vol. 5, #50
 June 26, 2000



A first key issue where the GOP leadership is blocking progress for America's families is providing a *real* prescription benefit for this nation's seniors through the Medicare program. The American public strongly supports providing seniors prescription coverage through Medicare. Indeed, a typical finding from a recent Emily's List poll found that 60% of Americans favor providing prescription coverage to seniors through the Medicare program (the Democratic plan), compared to 32% favoring using private insurance companies to cover seniors (the GOP plan).

However, instead of siding with the American public, the GOP leadership has been siding with their special-interest allies — drug companies that vehemently oppose a real Medicare prescription benefit for seniors. Indeed, drug companies are major contributors to GOP candidates and party committees. In the 1997-1998 election cycle, drug companies contributed a total of \$6.5 million to GOP candidates and party committees. Then, in 1999, a coalition called "Citizens for Better Medicare" — founded and largely financed by drug companies — was created specifically to defeat President Clinton's proposal for Medicare prescription coverage. So far in the 1999-2000 election cycle, the members of Citizens for Better Medicare have given about \$7.5 million to GOP candidates and party committees. Furthermore, press reports indicate that Citizens for Better Medicare plans to spend some \$30 million on unregulated ads and political activities in 2000 alone, in order to defeat the President's proposal.

President Clinton and congressional Democrats have been fighting for a voluntary, affordable Medicare prescription benefit for all of America's seniors since June 1999. At first, in 1999, the GOP leadership and their special-interest allies, the drug companies, simply tried to kill the Democratic proposal outright. For example, the Citizens for Better Medicare put out ads saying that President Clinton wanted to put "the government in your medicine cabinet."

However, this year, the GOP leadership and their special-interest allies decided that the best way to kill real prescription coverage through Medicare — which drug companies oppose because they claim it would endanger their high profit margins — was to offer a sham proposal of their own.

Hence, on June 28, by the narrow margin of 217 to 214, House Republicans passed their own prescription coverage proposal — a proposal supported by the drug companies. This proposal provides incentives for private insurance companies to offer seniors drug-only policies. However, there is a fundamental flaw with this proposal — private insurance companies themselves say it won't work. As recently as June 13, Chip Kahn, head of the Health Insurance Association of America stated, "We continue to believe that the concept of so-called drug-only private insurance would not work in practice." Similarly, the Blue Cross-Blue Shield Association put out a press release on June 15 stating, "Private stand-alone prescription drug insurance for Medicare beneficiaries will not work."

In addition to the fact that it simply won't work, there are several other flaws in the House GOP plan, including the following:

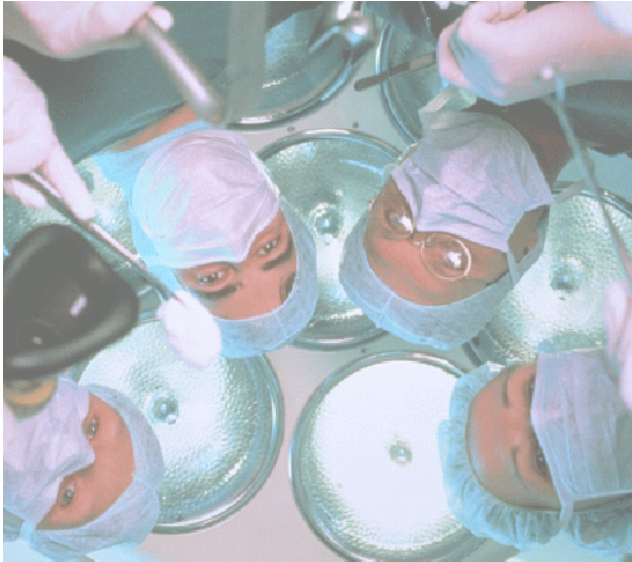
- ⊙ The House GOP bill does not make prescription coverage affordable. The bill does not provide direct premium assistance for middle-income seniors. Republicans subsidize insurers, but do nothing to assure that those premium subsidies will be passed on to seniors.
- ⊙ The House GOP bill is ineffective in obtaining better prescription drug prices for seniors. Instead, it creates small purchasing groups that will have little leverage in getting better prices for seniors.
- ⊙ The House GOP bill is the first step toward privatizing Medicare — forcing seniors to deal with private insurance companies, instead of having the choice of getting their prescriptions through Medicare.

Given the enormous evidence that the GOP plan simply would not work for seniors, why are Republicans promoting this plan? Because Republicans are trying to fool voters into believing that they want to address this issue, while at the same time siding with the pharmaceutical industry that is working against passage of any real Medicare prescription plan and funding GOP campaigns.

“Private stand-alone prescription drug insurance for Medicare beneficiaries will not work.”

— Blue Cross-Blue Shield Association

GOP IS BLOCKING REAL MANAGED CARE REFORM



A second key issue where the GOP leadership is blocking progress for working families is providing *real* managed care reform. Poll after poll shows that the American public strongly supports a strong, enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights. For example, a Kaiser/Harvard poll released in January found that 72% of Americans support a Patients' Bill of Rights that includes "giving people the right to sue their health plan," with the support nearly as strong among Republican voters (68% in favor) as among Democrats.

However, instead of siding with the American public, the GOP leadership has been siding with their special-interest allies — the HMO industry and the health insurance industry that vehemently oppose a real Patient's Bill of

Rights. Indeed, the Health Benefits Coalition — a coalition of the HMO industry, the health insurance industry, and employer groups created specifically to fight meaningful managed care reform — contributed a total of \$7.6 million in PAC, individual, and soft money contributions in the 1997-1998 election cycle to GOP candidates and party committees. Similarly, in the 1999-2000 election cycle so far, the Health Benefits Coalition has contributed \$4.8 million in PAC, individual, and soft money contributions to Republican candidates and party committees. In addition to campaign contributions, the Health Benefits Coalition is also spending millions on ads and lobbying to defeat *real* managed care reform.

Despite the fact that on October 7, 1999, the strong, enforceable Dingell-Norwood Patients' Bill of Rights was passed in the House by the bipartisan vote of 275 to 151 — with 68 moderate Republicans defying the GOP leadership to support the bill, no managed care reform bill has been sent to the President's desk over the last ten months!! (Over in the Senate, Republicans had passed a watered-down "reform" bill in July 1999.) Instead, both the House and Senate GOP leadership have been spending the last ten months working to ensure that a strong, enforceable bill does not become law.

The GOP leadership has used the tactic of **delay, delay, delay** to kill the Dingell-Norwood bill in conference. A conference committee (chaired by Senate GOP Whip Nickles) has been in existence since November 2, 1999 — and yet, over the last nine months, it has only met twice and has only resolved 2 of 22 key patient protection issues.

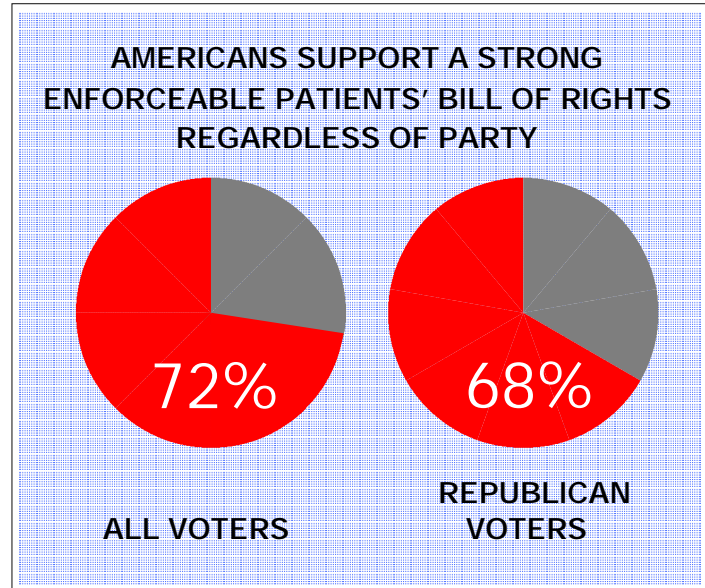
"The Nickles bill [passed by Senate Republicans as an amendment to the Labor-HHS-Education bill on June 29] reads like a cut-and-paste wish list written by and for the insurance industry. . . . Many other national organizations representing health professionals and patient groups have also come to the conclusion that the Nickles language was drafted to protect [HMOs] and is worse than current law."

— E. Ratcliffe Anderson
AMA Executive Vice President
July 19, 2000

Finally, on June 8, after the conference committee had been in existence for seven months and was making virtually no progress, Sens. Kennedy and Daschle offered the Dingell-Norwood bill on the Senate Floor, as the Senate was considering the DOD Authorization bill. The Nickles motion to table (thereby killing) the Dingell-Norwood bill only passed with 51 votes — with 4 Republican Senators and all Democrats present voting NO. [This shows that there are now 49 solid votes for real reform in the Senate](#) — with Vice President Gore able to break a tie, only one more vote is needed.

Then, on June 29, in a step backward, Sen. Nickles offered a slightly modified version of the flawed Senate GOP Leadership bill from last year as an amendment to the Labor-HHS-Education bill, barely passing it again with only 51 votes — with the same four GOP Senators who favor real reform voting NO. As can be seen from the quote on the previous page, it is this Nickles bill that the AMA has recently called “worse than current law.”

With the conference committee on managed care now in existence for [nine months](#) and still far away from agreement, it appears less and less likely that a strong, enforceable Patients’ Bill of Rights will be reported out of the conference committee before adjournment. Instead, there is growing speculation that the House and Senate GOP leadership will work to send to President Clinton’s desk a bill containing watered-down patient protections, along with “poison pills” (such as Medical Savings Accounts) that the President won’t sign. Hence, once again, it appears that the GOP leadership wants confrontation — rather than legislation for America’s working families.



Americans support a strong and enforceable
Patients’ Bill of Rights **regardless of party.**

— Kaiser/Harvard poll
January, 2000

GOP IS BLOCKING MEASURES TO IMPROVE PUBLIC EDUCATION

“[The GOP education agenda is] to shift federal aid away from public schools, while making it easier for parents to send their children to private schools.”

— *Washington Times*
October 20, 1997

A third key issue where the GOP leadership is blocking progress for working families is enacting key measures to improve public education. National poll after national poll has found that the American public now places improving public education as the **number-one issue** facing the country.

However, as with prescription coverage and managed care reform, instead of siding with the American public, the GOP leadership has been siding with their special-interest allies — the Religious Right that favors shifting federal aid *away* from public schools and *towards* private and religious schools. For example, the Christian Coalition, which has pushed for shifting taxpayer dollars from public education to private education, focuses their campaign contributions on Republican candidates. The Christian Coalition gave a total of \$252,500 to GOP congressional candidates and party committees in the last election cycle — **100%** of their total campaign contributions.

Blocking Democratic Agenda to Improve Public Education

The Republicans are once again also leaving town without enacting any major measures designed to improve the nation's public schools. Ever since January 1999, Democrats have been promoting a multi-pronged agenda to improve education — including initiatives to reduce classroom size, improve the quality of teaching, modernize our school facilities, institute new accountability measures, and increase access to higher education. Instead of joining hands with Democrats to adopt these initiatives, the House GOP leadership has been doing their best to kill them.

For example, once again this summer, the House GOP leadership is trying to kill President Clinton's class size reduction initiative. In the FY 2001 Labor-HHS-Education bill (H.R. 4577) that Republicans passed on June 14, Republicans eliminated targeted funding for class size reduction. Elimination of targeted funds for class size reduction would jeopardize the federal commitment to hire as many as 20,000 new teachers next year, as well as to continue support for the 29,000 teachers already hired. Similarly, the House GOP leadership continues to block the critically-important School Modernization Initiative, which Democrats have been promoting since 1996. On March 28, Rep. Nancy Johnson (R-CT) joined with Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY) to introduce a *bipartisan* School Modernization Initiative (H.R. 4094) — which is very similar to the original Democratic initiative. This bipartisan initiative would provide federal tax credits to pay interest on **\$25 billion** in bonds to build and modernize 6,000 public schools. And yet the GOP leadership continues to block consideration of this *bipartisan* initiative.

Instead, Pursuing GOP Agenda To Undermine Public Education

Instead of working with Democrats to enact major initiatives to improve the nation's public schools, the GOP leadership continues on an **opposite** course — pursuing the same failed GOP agenda focused on diverting scarce taxpayer dollars from public schools in order to subsidize attendance at private and religious schools.



Key components of the GOP education agenda remain the following:

⊙ **Education Savings Accounts** — One of the GOP top priorities remains Education Savings Accounts, which the President has already vetoed twice. These accounts divert scarce taxpayer dollars to subsidize attendance at private and religious schools. They are also yet another tax break for the wealthy, with 70% of the tax benefits going to the top 20% of wealthiest families.

⊙ **Private and Religious School Vouchers** — Federal funding for school vouchers, which also divert precious public resources to private and religious schools, has also remained a top GOP priority. For example, on October 21, 1999, more than three-fourths of Republicans voted for an amendment offered by Majority Leader Armey to create a \$100 million program of federally-funded

vouchers for private and religious school tuition. Fortunately, it was defeated.

⊙ **Education Block Grants** — Finally, Republicans have also been pursuing their GOP education block grant proposals throughout the 106th Congress. For example, on October 21, 1999, the GOP Congress passed a GOP Education Block Grant bill (the “Straight A’s” bill), block-granting three-fourths of Federal education programs (including Title I, Class Size Reduction, Teacher Training, and Safe and Drug-Free Schools) in a ten-state pilot program.

National poll after national poll has found that the American public now places improving public education as the **number-one issue** facing the country.



GOP IS BLOCKING A MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

A fourth key issue where the GOP leadership is blocking progress for working families is raising the minimum wage. The American public has voiced strong support for a minimum wage increase over the last couple of years. For example, an ABC News poll in late 1999 found that **83%** of Americans support a minimum wage increase, with the support nearly as strong among Republican voters (67% in favor) as among Democrats.

However, once again, instead of siding with the American public, the GOP leadership has been siding with their special-interest allies — the employer groups that oppose a minimum wage increase. Indeed, the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) and a variety of related special-interest groups that are vehemently opposed to a meaningful minimum wage increase have poured millions into Republican campaign coffers. Specifically, the NFIB and four other active groups (National Restaurant Association, National Retail Federation, Chamber of Commerce, and National Association of Convenience Stores) contributed a total of **\$2.6 million** to Republican candidates and party committees in the 1997-1998 election cycle (\$2.3 million in PAC contributions; \$294,000 in soft money). For the 1999-2000 election cycle, according to the latest data available, these groups have already showered GOP candidates and party committees with **\$1.6 million** (\$1.2 million in PAC contributions; \$368,000 in soft money).



President Clinton and congressional Democrats have been pressing for a one-dollar increase over two years in the minimum wage since January 1998. Indeed, in each of his last three State of the Union Addresses, President Clinton has highlighted his call for this increase. And yet, since January 1998, congressional Republicans have been blocking this minimum wage increase. This GOP delay is costing minimum wage workers and their families needed income.

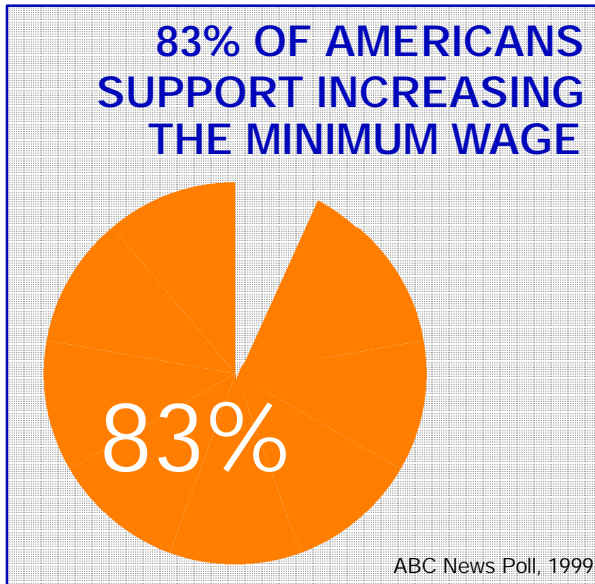
"The House agreed today to increase the federal minimum wage by a dollar an hour but coupled the measure to a \$123 billion tax-cut package sponsored by the Republicans and subject to a threatened veto by President Clinton — thereby imperiling the raise in the minimum wage."

New York Times, 3/10/00

The issue of raising the minimum wage is, more than anything else, an issue of simple justice for millions of hard-working Americans. Justice on this issue has been delayed for too long. People who work to support a family earning the minimum wage have seen their paychecks eroded by inflation. The purchasing power of the minimum wage today is **29% below** what it was in 1968. This is largely due to the fact that during the 1980s, a Republican Administration insisted on freezing the minimum wage at \$3.35.

After delaying action for two years, late in 1999, House and Senate Republicans decided that the best way to fight off a reasonable minimum wage increase was to play politics with the issue. House and Senate Republicans have come up with two tricks up their sleeves.

First, their GOP minimum wage bills fail to give minimum wage workers a dollar increase over two years, spreading the increase out over three — thereby shortchanging these workers. Secondly, displaying the height of cynicism, House and Senate Republicans have both attached to their minimum wage bills packages of massive, special-interest tax breaks that they have *known* the Administration has vowed to veto.



Senate Republicans acted first. In November 1999, they passed a minimum wage proposal that: 1) spread the one-dollar increase over three years; and 2) included a package of special-interest tax breaks totaling over \$50 billion over ten years. Then, on March 9, 2000, House Republicans finally brought a minimum wage bill to the Floor. The House GOP minimum wage proposal, like the Senate GOP bill, spread the one-dollar increase out over three years. Fortunately, however, Democrats and moderate Republicans were successful in amending the GOP bill to provide the increase over two years instead. In addition, House Republicans attached to the minimum wage bill a package of special-interest tax breaks even larger than the Senate Republicans' — [tax breaks totaling \\$123 billion over ten years](#).

While the Republicans called their tax bill a "Small Business" tax cut, targeted to help small businesses cope with the costs of an increased minimum wage, [those that would actually benefit the most from their bill were big businesses and the most wealthy](#). Indeed, [more than 73% of the benefits of the tax breaks would go to the top 1% of taxpayers — people with incomes over \\$319,000](#).

Hence, with utter cynicism, House and Senate Republicans are holding a minimum wage increase for hard-pressed working families hostage to a large tax cut package targeted to their wealthy friends.

GOP IS BLOCKING STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE

“By protecting both the Social Security and Medicare surpluses, we can lock in \$2.9 trillion of debt reduction in the next ten years, enabling us to get rid of the national debt by 2012. We can eliminate the burden of paying interest on the debt. And we can use part of these interest savings to extend the solvency of Social Security to 2057 and of Medicare to 2030.”

— President Clinton, 6/26/00



A fifth key issue where the GOP leadership is blocking progress for working families is enacting measures that would strengthen Social Security and Medicare. Poll after poll has found that strengthening Social Security and Medicare are a top priority. For example, in a New York Times poll taken earlier this year, when voters were asked how the budget surplus should be used, 56% chose strengthening Social Security and Medicare — whereas only 13% chose tax cuts.



The GOP Congress is once again leaving town without sending to the President *any* measures to strengthen Social Security and Medicare. Congressional Democrats are calling for a fiscally-responsible budget that puts Social Security and Medicare first — before massive tax cut schemes. Specifically, Democrats have put forward proposals to invest the budget surplus in strengthening Social Security and Medicare, while providing fiscally-responsible, targeted tax relief, as follows:

🎯 **A Social Security Lock-Box** — First, Democrats call for guaranteeing that **100%** of the Social Security surplus will be saved for the Social Security program. Under the Democratic proposal, there would be a lock-box for Social Security that would lock away the entire Social Security surplus for Social Security and debt reduction.

🎯 **Extending The Solvency of Social Security** — Second, Democrats would ensure that the benefits of the debt reduction that are due to Social Security are used to extend the solvency of Social Security until at least 2057. By contrast, Republican proposals fail to extend the solvency of Social Security by even one day.

- ⊙ **Taking Medicare Off-Budget & Creating A Medicare Lock-Box** — Third, Democrats call for taking Medicare entirely off-budget (as Social Security is now) and creating a Medicare lock-box that would protect the Medicare surpluses from being used to finance tax cuts or new spending initiatives. Democrats also propose transferring interest savings from paying off some of the debt to extending Medicare solvency to at least 2030.
- ⊙ **Providing Targeted Tax Relief** — While investing in strengthening Social Security and Medicare, Democrats are also calling for fiscally-responsible, targeted tax relief — including marriage penalty relief targeted to working families, as well as tax relief to help families make child care more affordable, help families save for retirement, help families pay for long-term care expenses, and help families make college tuition more affordable.

Instead of Strengthening Social Security and Medicare, The GOP Calls for Squandering the Surplus on Massive Tax Cuts and Partially Privatizing Social Security

Whereas Democrats believe that the surplus should be invested in strengthening Social Security and Medicare while at the same time providing fiscally-responsible, targeted tax relief to working families, Republicans call for dedicating the surplus to [massive](#) tax cuts, targeted to their wealthy friends, and to partially privatizing Social Security, as described below.

- S **Fiscally-Irresponsible Tax Cuts Targeted at the Wealthy** — As of July 27, House Republicans have already passed tax cuts totaling [over \\$900 billion](#) over ten years (when interest costs are included). Furthermore, the \$900 billion price tag [understates](#) the true cost of these GOP tax cuts. For example, the GOP version of estate tax relief (H.R. 8) is written in such a way that its true costs are pushed out beyond the 10-year budget window — with the cost of H.R. 8 exploding from [\\$105 billion](#) in the first 10 years to [\\$750 billion](#) in the second 10 years. In addition, these \$900 billion in GOP tax cuts are targeted to the wealthiest Americans — with [69%](#) of the tax cuts going to the top [10%](#) of taxpayers. Furthermore, House Republicans haven't even gotten to two of the top GOP tax-cutting priorities — cutting capital gains taxes and providing across-the-board cuts in income tax rates. Indeed, according to the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation, the tax cut plan put forward by presumptive GOP presidential nominee George W. Bush would cost a total of [\\$1.7 trillion](#) over ten years — [larger](#) than the available \$1.5 trillion on-budget surplus (if Medicare is taken off-budget).
- S **Partially Privatizing Social Security** — On top of \$1.7 trillion in tax cuts, Republicans are also calling for using \$1.1 trillion of budget surpluses for partially privatizing Social Security by establishing individual "carve-out" accounts. Under the GOP plan, benefits would not be guaranteed as they are under current law. Because the plan would "carve out" money from the Social Security Trust Fund to set up accounts, the Trust Fund would become insolvent sooner. Therefore, benefits would have to be cut. Someone who is 30 in 2002 could see their benefits cut by [54%](#) under the GOP plan.

GOP IS BLOCKING GUN SAFETY MEASURES



A sixth key issue where the GOP leadership is blocking progress for working families is enacting common-sense gun safety measures. Support for common-sense gun safety measures is overwhelming among the public. For example, an ABC News/Washington Post poll conducted in early May found that **81%** of the American public supports child safety locks on handguns. Similarly, the same poll found that **92%** of the American public supports background checks on people buying guns at gun shows.

However, once again, instead of siding with the American public, the GOP leadership has been siding with their special-interest allies — the gun rights lobby that opposes gun safety measures. The gun rights lobby is a **major** campaign contributor to Republicans and GOP party committees. The National Rifle Association is the predominant donor of the gun rights lobby, accounting for nearly 90% of the lobby's giving over the last decade. In the 1997-1998 election cycle, the gun lobby gave \$1.9 million in soft money, PAC, and individual contributions to Republican candidates and Republican party committees. Similarly, so far in the 1999-2000 election cycle, the gun lobby has given \$1.1 million in soft money, PAC, and individual contributions to Republican candidates and Republican party committees.

It has now been 15 months since the tragic mass shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado — a mass shooting that sparked a national debate on the need to reduce gun violence, including making it more difficult for children and criminals to acquire guns. And yet Congress has sent no gun safety measures to the President's desk. The Republican leadership has been using the strategy of **delay, delay, delay** on juvenile justice and gun safety ever since the Senate passed its version of the juvenile justice bill, with bipartisan, common-sense gun safety provisions, way back on May 20, 1999. Specifically:

- ⊙ After the Senate action on May 20, 1999, it took four weeks for the House GOP leadership to bring up and pass a juvenile justice bill — which it finally did on June 17 (although without gun safety provisions);
- ⊙ It took another six weeks for conferees to be appointed — with the Senate conferees named on July 28 and House conferees named on July 30;
- ⊙ And now there has been a conference committee on the juvenile justice bill in existence for exactly one year and yet the conference committee has not yet held a single substantive meeting!! (It did have a procedural, "pro forma" meeting on August 5, 1999.)

**"I'm sick and tired of Congress
not doing anything!"**

— Erin MacDonald-Evay

a Colorado high school student who came to lobby Congress
on gun safety in July 1999, *USA Today* 7/16/99

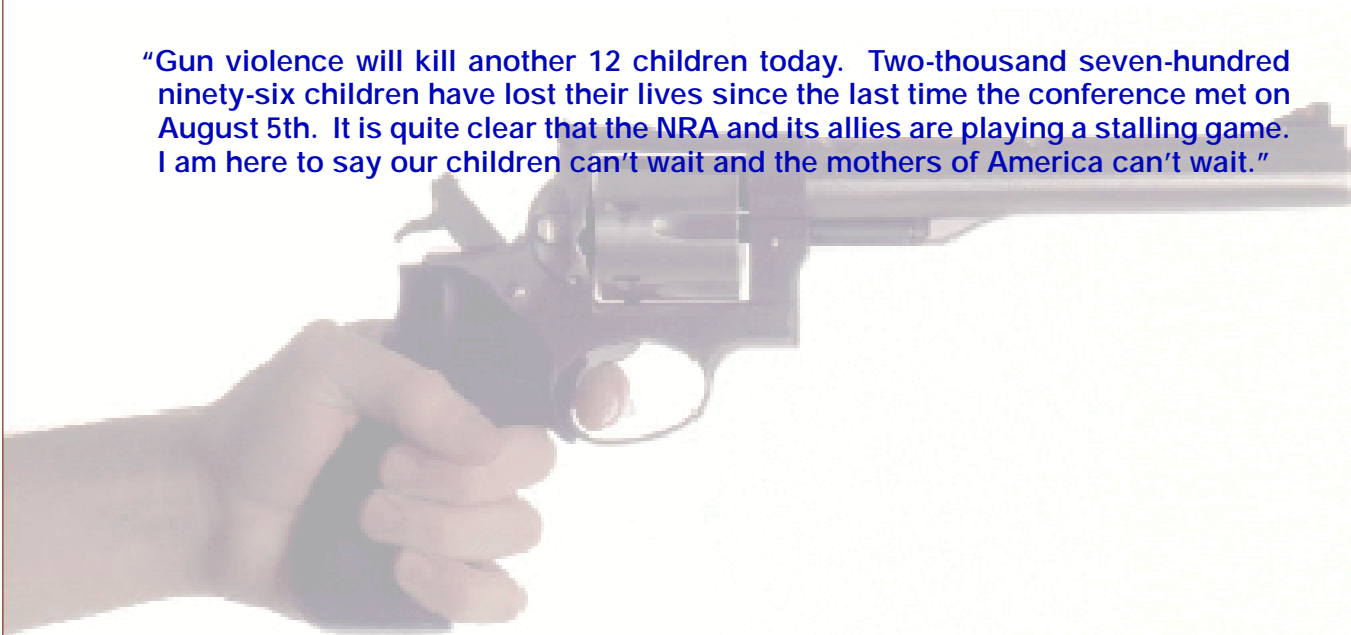
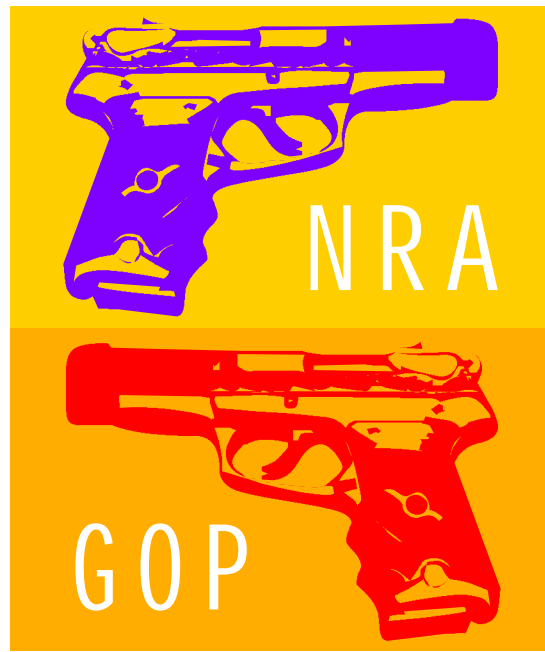
Indeed, on March 15, 2000, the House adopted by a bipartisan vote of 218 to 205 the Lofgren motion that instructed the conferees to hold their first substantive meeting by March 29. Despite the fact that this motion was adopted by a bipartisan vote of 218 to 205, the Republican Leadership simply ignored the motion — allowing the March 29th deadline to pass without any action. Then, even more cynically, on April 11, Republicans voted along with Democrats in favor of the Conyers-Carson-Jackson-Lee-McCarthy motion for the conferees to meet (which passed by the overwhelming vote of 406 to 22) — but they have continued to refuse to follow through on their own vote by convening a meeting of the conference!

Key Republicans have indicated that they may very well strip out all gun safety provisions and have the conference committee report out simply a juvenile justice bill before the Congress adjourns in October:

- S** On March 14, Majority Leader Armey stated that he would support dismantling the juvenile justice bill to eliminate the Senate-passed gun safety provisions. At his press conference, he stated, “We’re going to break those out [the juvenile crime provisions, excluding gun safety] and move them separately and move them along.”
- S** Similarly, on March 19, on Face the Nation, Senator Hatch, chair of the conference committee, stated, “I’m thinking of stripping the gun provisions off that bill.”

Perhaps Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY) summed up the current situation best on March 29:

“Gun violence will kill another 12 children today. Two-thousand seven-hundred ninety-six children have lost their lives since the last time the conference met on August 5th. It is quite clear that the NRA and its allies are playing a stalling game. I am here to say our children can’t wait and the mothers of America can’t wait.”



"Take away 'soft money' and we wouldn't be in the majority in the House and the majority in the Senate and couldn't win back the White House. Hell's going to freeze over first before we get rid of soft money."

— Sen. Mitch McConnell

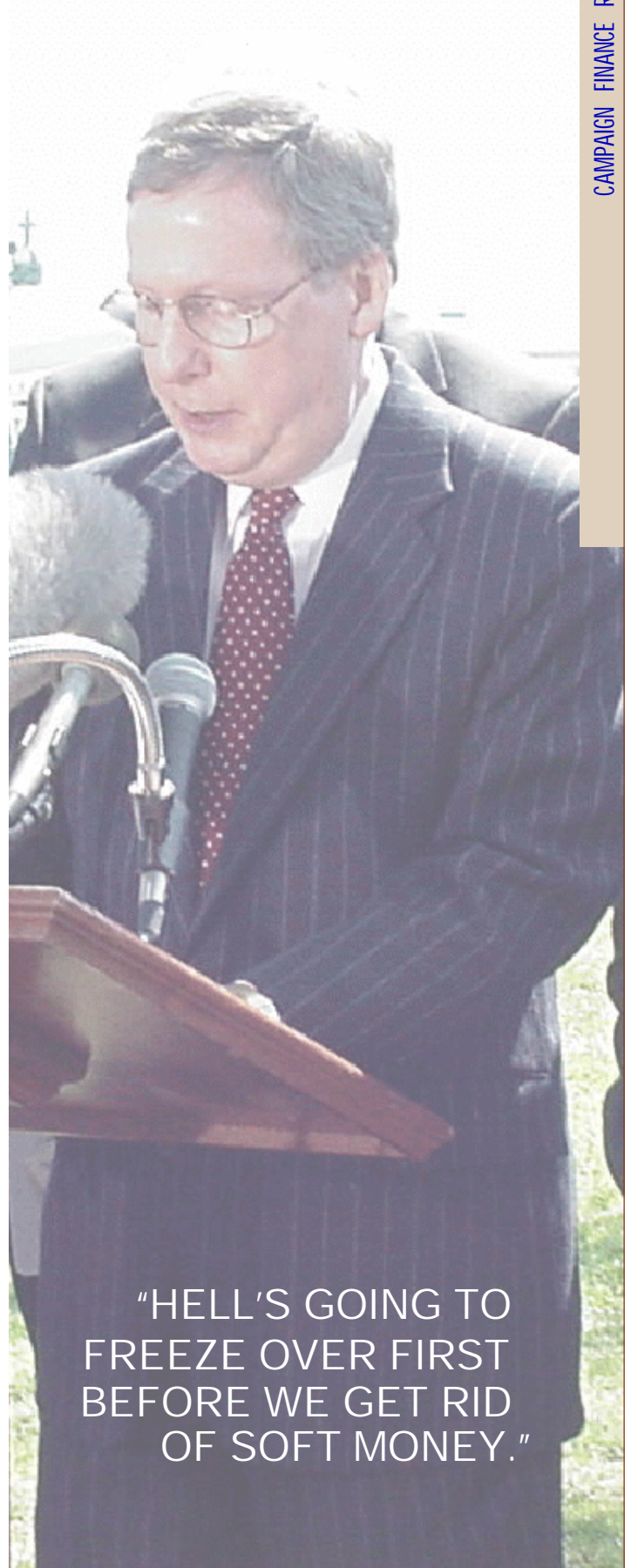
Washington Post

April 11, 1999

Finally, a seventh key issue where the GOP leadership is blocking progress for working families is campaign finance reform. National polls have consistently shown that Americans strongly support meaningful campaign finance reform — including the banning of soft money. For example, a recent ABC News/Washington Post poll found that 66% of Americans supported significant campaign finance reform.

However, once again, instead of siding with the American public, the GOP leadership has been siding with their special-interest allies — big-money donors. As Sen. McConnell pointed out in the quote above, the Republicans are dependent on massive contributions from their wealthy friends and special-interest allies — and therefore do not want reform. For example, in the 1997-1998 election cycle, the Republican party collected \$425 million in campaign contributions — whereas the Democratic party collected \$260 million. In other words, the Republican party collected 63% more than Democrats. Similarly, so far in the 1999-2000 election cycle, the Republican party has collected \$179 million in campaign contributions — whereas the Democratic party has collected \$104 million. In other words, the Republican party has collected 72% more than the Democrats so far this cycle.

Despite the fact that on September 14, 1999, the meaningful, bipartisan Shays-Meehan campaign finance reform bill, which would have banned soft money, was passed in the House by the bipartisan vote of 252 to 177 — with 54 Republicans defying the GOP leadership to support the bill, no major campaign finance reform bill has sent to the President's desk over the last ten and a half months!! Instead, the GOP leadership has been spending the last ten and a half months working to ensure that major campaign finance reform does not become law.



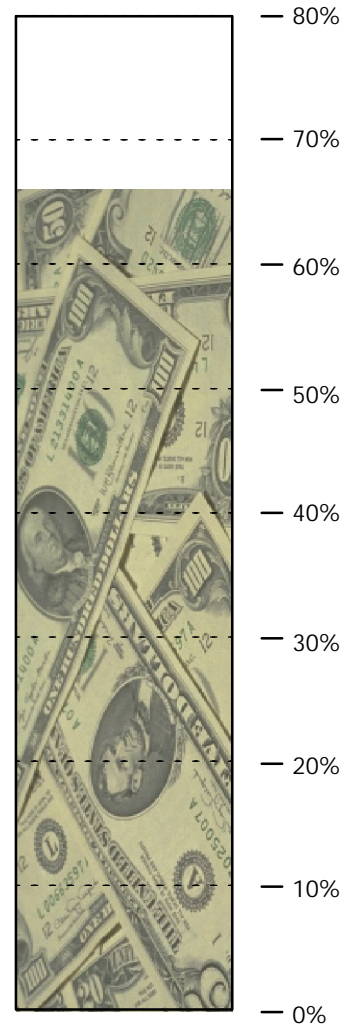
"HELL'S GOING TO
FREEZE OVER FIRST
BEFORE WE GET RID
OF SOFT MONEY."

Since the House and Senate GOP leadership are siding with their big-money contributors instead of with the American public, it is not surprising that the Shays-Meehan bill after it passed the House has been successfully [blocked](#) in the Senate. Specifically, in October 1999, the Senate GOP leadership successfully filibustered the Shays-Meehan bill. On the key vote, only 52 Senators voted to invoke cloture, which would have allowed Shays-Meehan to be debated and voted upon — when 60 votes were needed. Upon conclusion of the vote on cloture, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott declared campaign finance reform “dead” for this Congress.

Despite the success of the GOP leadership in blocking a major campaign finance reform bill, such as Shays-Meehan, Democrats and moderate Republicans have had one significant victory this year — the enactment of a narrower bill requiring disclosure of donors by “Section 527” political groups. The ultimate passage of this bill in the House marked a sharp [reversal](#) by House Republicans who had spent several weeks vigorously opposing it — indeed, voting [against](#) it on May 25 (on a motion to recommit) and again on June 9 (on another motion to recommit.) However, the galvanizing event was on June 8 when Sen. McCain won approval of the measure by the Senate (originally as an amendment to the DOD authorization bill) with the votes of 43 Democrats and 14 Republicans. Ultimately, the GOP leadership saw the handwriting on the wall, allowed the bill to move forward, and ultimately allowed it to be sent to the President. As the *New York Times* (6/29/00) reported, “The vote [in favor of the bill] was a stern rebuke to House and Senate Republican leaders who had tried to kill the measure.”

However, supporters of campaign finance reform argue that, although enactment of the Section 527 disclosure bill was a useful step, Congress must get a much broader bill, such as the Shays-Meehan bill, to the President’s desk before adjournment in October. For example, after the Section 527 disclosure bill was sent to the President’s desk, Sen. McCain — one of the bill’s authors — pointed out: “This bill [the 527 disclosure bill] will not solve what is wrong with our campaign finance system. It will not do away with the millions of soft-money dollars that are polluting our elections.” (*CQ Weekly*, 7/1/00)

66% OF AMERICANS SUPPORT CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM



ABC News/ Washington Post